UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

SCHOOL CLIMATE:
A SURVEY OF ADOLESCENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS

BY

SHEILA MELLON

©

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled **SCHOOL CLIMATE: A SURVEY OF ADOLESCENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS** submitted by SHEILA MELLON in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF EDUCATION in COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between school climate and student perceptions and attitudes. The study focussed on three areas: individual student self-ratings of satisfaction with achievement and relationships; student perceptions of school satisfaction and involvement; and factors which contribute to increased student satisfaction and involvement.

The study was conducted in an urban Alberta high school where two hundred and eighty-four students voluntarily completed a survey designed by the researcher. No practically significant results were identified when the questionnaire theme sections were analyzed in relation to the demographic categories of academic route, gender, or years spent in high school.

However, notable results did emerge in a pattern which indicated the students within the sample perceived the attitudes of their peers to be more negative than their own perceptions. The relationships among factors, such as part-time employment, and involvement in extracurricular activities, and student attitudes and participation were also examined.

Both theoretical and practical implications of these findings for researchers and educators are explored and discussed. Further research involving a qualitative methodology

is stongly recommended. More extensive studies which involve the interrelationships among the students' perceptions, home, friends, and school would also prove invaluable to this area of school research.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade high schools in Canada have been subjected to increasing scrutiny from politicians, parents and the taxpayers who fund them. Schools exist within a social environment which is characterized by rapid change. In an attempt to cope with the rate of change, many groups look to the educational system to solve the problems of the wider society. School improvement research and interventions have been a primary focus of educational researchers for many years. Political studies have urged educators to bring about quantitative changes including more days of schooling, more mathematics and more homework (Frymier, 1987). This "more is better" approach to school improvement has often attempted to gain credibility with the public by offering a more rigorous curriculum or school program without improving existing programs. As difficulties have evolved within our school systems, a strong surge to move "back to the basics" has become the interest of many educational administrators and policy makers.

Many empirical studies have taken another approach to improving schools. They have placed emphasis on the investigation and identification of the characteristics common to effective or "good" schools (such as, King & Peart, 1990). From this perspective researchers have attempted to identify successful elements in existing school curriculum and programs. The quality of the school climate or "atmosphere," leadership, extracurricular programs, curricular programs, and student services have been identified as key components of successful schools (King & Peart, 1990). Many of these components are tangible entities which may be physically changed or manipulated. School climate, on the other hand, is a projected image resulting from the interactions of the people within a given system. As with any organization, a school becomes known for its own distinctive reputation or personality by community members, staff and students. This reputation may effect such things as student enrollment and public participation. The focus of this thesis is to introduce and explore the concept of school climate and investigate the formation and existence of the culture, or cultures, within a school which defines the projected climate.

This concept of school climate has consistently been the focus of the literature on school improvement (Creemers, Peters, & Reynolds, 1989). Although most readily agree that every school has its own particular climate, researchers have a difficult time accurately defining the concept (Lindelow, Mazzarella, Scott, Ellis, & Smith, 1989). The literature in this area becomes somewhat confusing when some authors use the term without defining it or use it synonymously with other terms such as atmosphere, culture, environment, ethos, milieu, setting or context (Anderson, 1985). An exploration of how past literature has dealt with this concept is conducted in the literature review following this chapter.

A discussion of school climate falls under the general heading of social psychology. Social psychologists attempt to understand and explain how thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, perceived, imagined or implied presence of others (Stewin, 1992). School climate, or the atmosphere of a school, is a projection of the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors the students and staff have about their school which evolves from the interactions of the members within that system.

Although some of the literature has used the concept of climate interchangeably with the concept of culture there are some distinctions. Every school has a common culture which is known by all members of the organization. The product of the interactions within this culture is what the public outside of the school senses as the climate of the school. Experience of the culture is limited to the members within the school. Outsiders to the school may be able to experience the resulting impression of the interactions, but they are not acquainted with the intricacies of the unspoken rules by which the members of the organization live.

The differences between culture and climate may be described in terms of the participation an audience has at an artistic production. An audience which comes to the theater to attend a production is able to experience only the outcome of the cast's interactions with each other. Audience enjoyment will be dependent on the successes or failures of the exchanges among the members of the cast in the development and presentation of the production. The audience members will be able to acquire a "feel" about the drama they are viewing, but this will be the extent of their involvement. The audience has not been involved in the numerous rehearsals, has no knowledge of possible personality conflicts within the cast, and does not share in the expectations the cast and crew have for the production. The audience is able to experience and share in the climate which is created by the culture of the cast and crew.

Another analogy which offers a similar description is that of a car engine. The average car owner does not have an in-depth understanding of the intricate functioning of the various parts of an engine. What car owners do realize is whether or not the engine is running properly. If the parts are not functioning as they should, there will be excess exhaust, leaks, or unwarranted wear and tear on the rest of the car. Comparing a school to a machine such as a car may not be the most flattering comparison, but some aspects overlap. If a car (or school) is running well, we are not overly concerned and do what is required to maintain its performance. Some owners may be motivated to add accessories to improve its appearance and add to its overall worth. If the car (or school) is not functioning as we wish it to or if it is in need of serious repair, we become concerned to the point of wanting to repair it. The culture (or parts of the car engine) of the car produces the climate/impression perceived by others (the output of the engine) in the same manner the culture (the functioning subgroups or parts) of the school produces the climate (the feeling or reputation) of the school. The interaction within the culture is the basis of the overall feeling that people within perceive about a particular school. This feeling (the climate) is projected to whom ever is associated with the school or interacts with its members.

The overall common culture of the school is, in turn, a product of the many subcultures which function within the school community. The subcultures may be overt or discrete. For example, the overall administration and the body of teachers are two very noticeable subcultures within every school. There are also many student subculture groups which are very identifiable, anyone who has received formal schooling will be able to identify the "jocks" or the "preppies" from their past school experiences. As Lefrancois (1992, p. 435) states, "Here in Edmonton, they call themselves by such names a skaters, punks, thrashers, head bangers, and death rockers." The labels may change over the years, but identifiable group memberships last. Therefore, a thorough investigation of the climate and culture of a school necessitates identification of the variables and products which are involved in the daily interactions among members in the school system. The review of the relevant literature provides a more involved discussion of the components involved in these interactions.

The overall culture of a school is, in essence, the sense of defined community within the school. Some schools seem to achieve a strong sense of community and togetherness within the school while others have several smaller groups functioning within the system, which may be working in opposition to the improvement of the school as a whole. The members within the system are usually aware of what is expected of them in order to maintain membership within the school, and most students conform accordingly. A minority of the students are unable to, or choose not to conform to the organization's expectations. Sebald (1992) suggests, "Although failure of schools to captivate student interest is usually rationalized by authorities as 'failure to communicate' the truth is that the message has been communicated clearly but is unacceptable to the young" (p. 189). A discussion and exploration of student subcultures and adolescent group identity and membership is the focus of the latter part of the literature review.

It is also important to understand that the perceptions that the individuals hold about the school or people within the school are as influential as the interactions among people in the evolution of the school climate. The perceptions of the members of an organization, whether valid or invalid, are influential in determining their behavior and engagement in activities within that system. An investigation of students' perceptions, and expectations is important when an attempt is made to explore the influence the students' attitudes have upon the school climate.

Purpose of the Study

The major purpose of this study is to investigate the important contributions that the individual's perceptions, expectations, and attitudes offer to the overall school climate or atmosphere. More specifically, the researcher wishes to do the following: (1) to investigate individual student perceptions of self satisfaction with achievement and relationships; (2) to study student perceptions of school satisfaction and involvement; and (3) to research factors within a school which may contribute to increased satisfaction and involvement.

The exploration of these issues were pursued within the context of an urban high school in Alberta. The authorities within the school chosen for the study implemented a school improvement program a year prior to the commencement of this study. Given the program had been established within the school prior to this study, the researcher cannot imply cause in interpreting the results. The purpose of this thesis is to explore the importance of student perceptions and their possible influence within the school, it is not to attempt to evaluate the school or any existing programs.

Statement of the Problem

While investigating the human influence in the evolution of school climate, the main objective is to examine the influence of students' perceptions and attitudes concerning their experience in school on the development of the overall school climate. A sample of 284 students in an urban Alberta high school was surveyed about their own beliefs and their perceptions about others' beliefs concerning their school and its climate.

The following research questions are posed by the researcher and are presented here to emphasize the major thrust of the current study. The rationale for the questions is addressed within the context of the literature review of this thesis.

1. Is a difference noted in the attitudes and perceptions of school experiences for the general-level students in comparison to the academic-level students?

2. Is gender a differentiating factor in positive or negative student perceptions?

3. Does a relationship exist between the students' ages and/or the number of years in high school and the perceptions of school experience?

4. Is there a relationship between student employment and students' attitudes towards themselves and school?

5. Does a negative or positive relationship exist between the student's involvement in extracurricular activities and the student's perceptions of his or her school experience?

6. What impact, if any, does this specific school improvement program have on the attitudes of the students within the school?

7. Does there seem to be a difference in what the individual student perceives compared to what they think other students in the system perceive?

Significance of the Study for Research and Practice

When business organizations want to make their businesses or products more attractive to the consumer, the administration consults the consumer for feedback. In the same manner, educators need to involve students and learn their viewpoints and considerations in school improvement strategies in order to increase the likelihood of creating lasting positive changes within schools.

Although the consideration of student input is not a new idea, the validity of student viewpoints may be questioned. As mentioned earlier, the validity of the student perceptions is not the concern. The student's perception, favorable or unfavorable, creates his or her experience within the school. Exploration of student concerns may reveal common themes which will identify areas in need of attention and improvement. Not all student concerns or suggestions will be feasible to address and remediate, but the willingness of administration to accept student concerns as valid will further the evolution of the concept of community within the school. The traditional hierarchy within the school may become softened and enable school personnel and students to become team members in the effort to improve the school. When people realize that they can make a contribution or a difference, their commitment to the membership may become strengthened. As change and improvement are likely to be gradual, the administration and teachers must be committed to the purpose. If the students are not able to sense the commitment from the staff, it will be difficult to entice the student involvement which is an integral factor in changing student attitudes.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter I, an introductory chapter, serves to introduce the areas of research which contribute to the investigation of school climate. Chapter II is a literature review which provides definition clarification and background information on the relevant research that is related to the investigation of school climate, school culture, or cultures, and the projected images the public perceives. At the beginning of the chapter, the author introduces the phenomenon of high school dropouts as one of the main forces which drives the literature on school improvement. The author presents the concept of school climate and discusses how it has been described in past research studies. A link between school climate and school culture is provided and described. The investigation of culture is developed into a discussion of subcultures, and adolescent group identity formation. From this discussion, student perceptions, expectations and attitudes are addressed in the context of school climate evolution.

In Chapter III, the research design and methodology are presented and the development of the research instrument and procedures for data collection are described. The generalizability and limitations of the study are discussed in this chapter. A self-report inventory which investigated the themes of self satisfaction, student perceptions of school and others, and attitudes about school was administered to a sample of 284 students in the grades 10 through 12 (see Appendix C). The research findings and results are presented in Chapter IV. In the final chapter the study is summarized, conclusions are drawn, and some recommendations for further research are developed.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Three separate, but related, areas of school research are addressed and integrated in this review of the literature. The first section serves to introduce the issue which motivates a great deal of the research in the area of high school improvement: the dropout phenomenon. An exploration of the extent of the problem and a discussion of possible interventions is presented. The second portion of the literature review presents an investigation of the characterization of school climate as it has been dealt with in past research. A link is provided to the similar, yet operationally distinct, concept of school culture. The concluding section of this review serves to provide an analysis of many of the components which are essential in the development of culture including: the concepts of subculture, group identification, adolescent or student perceptions, and attitudes. Throughout the literature review, the author outlines the process of exploration experienced in the investigation of this study. Many areas of educational research were consulted in an attempt to more fully grasp an understanding of the concept of climate as it is experienced in an organization such as a school. This one concept reflects the quality of the summation of interactions within a school. It may be identified as an "attitudinal thermometer" which indicates the healthiness of the school's interpersonal relations. In this sense, school climate becomes a useful measure with which a school administrator may identify required changes within his or her school. However, before reviewing the constructs and concepts from the literature, definitions of some terms are given in order to clarify the focus of the current study.

Definitions

The following definitions identify the manner in which the author utilizes the terms in this chapter:

School Climate: The projected "feel" which is perceived by visitors or "outsiders" to the school community. This feel is the summation of the individuals' perceptions of how school personnel and students behave and interact (See pages 31-36 for further discussion).

School Culture: Refers to the interaction of individuals and groups in an organization. The interactions are influenced by a common set of values, beliefs and practices which operate within the school (See pages 39-40 for further discussion).

Adolescent Subculture: Refers to the set of "unwritten rules" of behavior which regulates adolescents with the society or school. Sebald (1992) suggests that the groups are frequently formed without the encouragement, acceptability, or full cognizance of the "parent culture" (See pages 27-29 for further discussion).

Peer Group: A global categorization of groups of students, varying in size and membership. The groups are usually not formalized or institutionalized agents of society. Peer groups range both in their size and the level of intimacy shared between members (See pages 30-32 for further discussion).

Clique: A small group between two and twelve students who are generally the same gender and age. The members in these groups are usually quite close, share common interests, and spend a great deal of time together.

Crowd: Large reputation-based collectives of similarly stereotyped individuals of both genders who may or may not spend much time together (Brown, 1990, p. 177).

Introduction

For many years now, researchers in the area of school improvement have investigated the high school dropout phenomenon (Atwater, 1992; Bryk & Thum, 1989; Natriello, Pallas, & McDill; 1986). The literature describing school dropouts needs to be considered in an attempt to examine the relationship between a school's culture and its at-risk students and dropouts. It is essential to recognize that student behavior is seen as a function of the social processes of the school: its norms, expectations, evaluations and relationships. There is a reciprocal interaction which takes place between the student and the culture of the school which ultimately produces the climate which is perceived by others. High schools are not all the same, to the extent that they differ in their social environments, they will differ in their learning outcomes and effectiveness to keep the students in school. To attempt to understand how to keep students in school one must first identify the source of concern.

Dropouts - Defining the Problem

"Dropping out of school has been viewed as a serious educational and societal problem for many decades" (Santrock, 1990, p. 300). Nearly one third of Canadian young people leave school before graduation (King & Peart, 1990). As we begin the 1990's approximately 100,000 Canadian young people are dropping out every year (Alberta Education, 1988). "School dropout is a highly visible sign of a society that has failed to prepare its youth for successful transition into adulthood" (Kushman & Kinney, 1989, p. 345). Dropouts or early school leavers in Alberta are defined as: 14-18 year old students, registered September

30th, not in school the following September 30th. These students did not receive a diploma, and did not complete other school programs (Alberta Education, 1988).

Consequences of Dropping Out

One major concern is that few of the young people who currently drop out of our schools have developed a sense of self-worth nor are they well prepared to get or hold a job (King & Peart, 1990). The school has been regarded as the institution which prepares youth to take on the responsibility of adulthood. While in school, adolescents are expected to develop skills which will prepare them to become socially and vocationally competent. If the student, for whatever reason, is unable to complete the process, this individual will find him or herself ill prepared and possibly unable to fulfill adult responsibilities. When dropouts abandon school they face a labor market in which they command little bargaining power. It is predicted that dropouts can expect to hold lower-level jobs and have the highest unemployment rates (Atwater, 1992). It is projected that by the year 2000, 62.9% of the new jobs available will require at least twelve years of education and training (Employment and Immigration Canada, 1991). Fuhrman (1986) cautions that the toll of underachievement on society is great, both in human misery and in terms of the financial costs to society as a whole. Kushman and Kinney (1989) warn that the concern about dropouts is two-fold, there are both moral and economic implications. Firstly, societies based on humanistic and democratic principles cannot simply write off large numbers of youth because their failures in school limit their future potential. Secondly, large numbers of dropouts weaken the economy because they may be unprepared for work and place a burden on unemployment and welfare systems.

The definition and description of a dropout varies from one school division to the next (see page 17 for a more detailed description of Alberta's dropout definition). It is essential to obtain a basic understanding of the personality profile of a potential dropout in order to intervene accordingly. Sebald (1992) provides the following description of a high school dropout:

> The dropout can be characterized as an individual feeling relatively helpless in mastering or coping with the environment. Such persons are preoccupied with basic physical and security needs rather than with self improvement or achievement, and focus on immediate contingencies rather than on aspirations and abstractions (p. 344).

Dropping Out: A Single Event or a Process?

Dropout behavior is characterized as a process rather than a single event. Rarely does a student with no prior history of truancy just suddenly drop out of school. The act of dropping out of school appears to be the culmination of a long process plagued with problems involving poor performance, frustration, failure and dislike of school (Atwater, 1992; Rice, 1990). Bryk and Thum

(1989) state that dropping out is not a spontaneous decision but rather a gradual drifting away from the school as a locus of the student's activities. The actual event which concludes the process of withdrawal may be minor: a misunderstanding with a teacher, parent or peer. The incident, although minor, may be the last in a compilation of difficulties which leaves the student unable to cope.

Much of the past and present research in this area has identified personal or background characteristics of the at-risk students or dropouts (Conger, 1991; Larsen & Shertzer, 1987; Kushman & Kinney, 1989; Rice, 1990). The focus of this approach is to identify the problem or problems with the individual student or group of students and attempt to intervene accordingly. Researchers such as Natriello, Pallas, and McDill (1986) have suggested that it is important to identify other contributing characteristics which lead to the process of dropping out. Wehlage and Rutter (1986) state that since traditional research has attempted to identify characteristics least amenable to change (student characteristics), the focus of new research should be directed toward understanding the institutional character of schools and how this affects the student. Wehlage and Rutter have been credited for being among the first researchers to approach the dropout phenomenon by examining possible contributing school related variables (Bryk & Thum, 1989; Natriello, Pallas, and McDill, 1986).

Permission for use of this diagram not obtained from author

(Natriello, Pallas, & McDill, 1986, p. 431)

At the same time Wehlage and Rutter (1986) have been criticized by Bryk and Thum (1989) because the variables considered in their research were taken from individual student reports about attitudes toward school and behavior in and out of school. The author of the present study aligns herself with Wehlage and Rutter in emphasizing the importance of personalized student accounts of perceptions and attitudes. Each student's experience in high school is unique. It is essential to obtain individual reports of student perceptions in order to evaluate the high school experience from a range of adolescent perspectives. Before integrating the dropout phenomenon into an investigation of school climate and student perceptions, a discussion which addresses dropout intervention is required. As the educational system has evolved, more researchers and administrators have become increasingly interested in measures of prevention and intervention rather than continually approaching their school concerns through a reactive stance.

Student Retention and Dropout Intervention

"Attention to student retention over the past few years has led to increased government pressure on schools to retain students and increase the number of graduates" (King & Peart, 1990, p. 120). Fairer, Neufeld, and Miles (1983) suggest that although there is no single program for intervention, the current improvement movement draws on the results of the research on "good" schools to assess school effectiveness and to systematically implement the essential elements of effective schooling. School climate measurement and manipulation is an integral part of this process and forms the basis of many intervention programs (Beetler, 1984; Dowdle, 1990; Duckworth, 1988; Person, 1990; Richmond, 1990; Smyer & Bliss, 1991; Sturgeon & Beer; 1990; VanSciver, 1986). Intervention through improved school climate may alter the high school experience for many potential dropouts (Eicholtz, 1984; Fris, 1989; Keefe, Kelley, & Miller, 1985).

Attendance improvement programs or dropout prevention programs can be classified into two basic categories. The most common approach holds the student accountable for his or her attendance. This policy approach prescribes interventions for those students who are chronically absent. The second approach is preventive in nature and involves making the school an organization that is both positive and supporting of the diverse needs of the students.

The first approach introduced often involves punitive attendance policies. To be effective Duckworth (1988) indicated that the schools must have a computerized system of monitoring and recording up to date absences, a consistency in imposing penalties for repeat offenders and an effective alliance between teachers and parents to reduce truancy. Zafirau (1987) describes a school which withholds credit in any course in which the student is excessively absent. The school which is described in Zafirau's article allows the students to have six absences per class each quarter without penalty. The students are then required to appeal for credit if their absences are greater than the outlined number.

Most, if not all, high schools have an attendance policy which offers a consequence to the student for failing to attend classes. The successes of the individual schools which follow this approach are as varied as the attendance policies which are implemented in the schools. Over time administrators have come to question the effectiveness of the punitive measures. This shift in opinion has introduced programs and policies which attempt to entice and engage students into various aspects of high school life.

It is suggested that the majority of high-school dropouts have the ability to complete school. With this information at hand, many school districts have developed a variety of programs to keep students from dropping out (Atwater, 1992). Desnoyer and Pauker (1988) suggest that special programs offering a preventative approach to the attendance problem may be grouped into four different categories. The first category involves all programs which offer tutorial-remedial assistance. Since poor academic achievement is considered to be one of the greatest risk factors facing dropouts, many schools provide students with extra assistance in their academic work.

Another assistance program category includes the guidance and counselling services which are offered within the high school (Hathaway, Sheldon, & McNamara, 1989). Counselling services within the schools are required to provide students with assistance in areas such as self-management (behavior) skills, life-management skills, stress-management, and crisis intervention. The services offered by individual schools will vary with the needs of the student population. In addition to professional support, many schools now offer "Peer Support Programs" (King & Peart, 1990). The leaders of this support service train successful students to assist at-risk students and provide support and possible mentorship.

The third category of preventive programs is the work-study or work-experience programs. Students may be placed on a job site for half of their school day. This placement is expected to provide the student with the opportunity to acquire job skills, and become more familiar with the expectations of the work place (Payne, 1989; Levine & Havighurst, 1989). Emphasis is placed on career training and job search assistance while the student is still in school.

Alternative curricula which are adapted to the special needs of students at-risk are grouped together in the fourth category. These programs modify existing curricula so that it may become more appropriate for students who are unable to cope with the regular curriculum. In Alberta, the Integrated Occupations Program (I.O.P.) offers students in grades 8 through 12 a curriculum which is specially suited to their needs. The program was designed to enable the students to develop entry-level vocational abilities and become responsible members of society. This outline of intervention programs serves as a basic introduction to what is available in many schools across Canada and the United States

A current philosophy behind school retention is based on the premise that if students attend class they will pass (King & Peart, 1990). The schools which deem this philosophy to be important tend to implement programs offering incentives to students to attend classes. Although the incentives are extrinsic in nature, the philosophy involves the premise that by attending school the student's performance will improve and the individual will experience the intrinsic reward of academic success. The type of incentive offered to the student depends on the type of program which is implemented in the school. The incentives may range from a six pack of Coke to investments for future college tuition.

One such program has been offered since the school year of 1990/1991 by the urban high school which is the focus of this study. The school offers a range of incentives which have been donated by businesses in the community. In the past these prizes have included hamburgers, T-shirts, ball caps, sunglasses, portable stereos, mountain bikes, gift certificates, balloon rides and a car. The student's eligibility is determined by perfect or near perfect attendance (only one excused absence per month). The students who have perfect or near perfect attendance for a two month period are entitled to participate in a field trip (such as downhill skiing) which is scheduled during school time. The same students' names are also entered in a draw for some of the incentives previously listed (such as gift certificates, t-shirts and Walkmans). At the end of each semester an assembly is held for the entire school. Students with perfect or near perfect attendance are presented with a certificate of achievement and a small prize such as a six pack of Coke, a hat, a t-shirt, or a poster. They are then once again eligible to have their names put into a draw for the more expensive and exotic prizes (such as mountain bikes, blue jeans, balloon rides, a car).

This program was implemented to function as a student retention program. After the first year of operation, the school counsellor cautioned that the program had not captured the interest of the chronic non-attenders (School Counsellor, personal communication, May 1992). Although the attendance of students did not respond as dramatically as initially hoped, the improved attendance had impacted the school's honor role listing. Many of the students who were attending more frequently were experiencing an increase in their grade averages. One student commented that she "wouldn't have dreamed she could do this well if she didn't skip classes" (Student, personal communication, June 1992).

School officials reported that four areas have improved for the school since the implementation of the program. These include: (1) cooperation with the business community has greatly increased, (2) a message has been communicated to the students and community that if they miss school they miss out on more than prizes, (3) the response to the program from students and the community is growing and improving, and (4) the students who have qualified for the incentives have improved attendance, marks and attitude toward school (School publication, June 1992).

A message of mixed reviews of acceptance was drawn from informal interviews conducted with members of the school community (Student and staff interviews, personal communication, June 1992). Some of the students were very involved and supportive of the program and its intent, while some held no opinion of the program, and others expressed a negative attitude towards the stringent eligibility rules. From the time of implementation the program has undergone some alterations to better suit the needs of the school and the students. The school officials have been impressed with the positive impact it has had on many of the students' perceptions of their school. In the latter section of this chapter the relationship between student perceptions and the quality of a school's climate will be explored. The exploration of this study has lead the investigator from the defined problem of dropping out to various areas of related school and adolescent research which may provide insight as to the development of the problem and possible areas of intervention. One area which should be addressed when an investigation is completed to discover a possible link between dropouts and school climate is the existence of adolescent subcultures.

Subcultures

There is rarely one single culture in a school; there may be many subcultures interacting within the global school culture and climate. It is important to note that there is no uniform subculture for all students. Sebald (1992) suggests differences in peer culture are often based on variables such as socioeconomic class, age, race, ethnicity and rural or urban residence. Coleman, Hoffer, and Kilgore (1981) suggest that an individual may find several cultures operating within the larger social unit of the organization: a managerial culture, various occupationally based cultures, and worker (or student) cultures based on shared experiences.

Each high school has its own distinctive student subculture groups such as the "Jocks", and "Preppies", or as Lefrancois (1992) indicated in Edmonton there are some student groups known as the "Headbangers", "Skaters", and "Punks". Sebald (1992) indicates that a subculture offers its members a number of "services": (1) common norms and values, (2) a subcultural argot (specialized lingo), (3) channels of communication not shared with outsiders, (4) unique styles and fads, (5) a sense of solidarity, (6) a status structure, (7) the charisma of leaders or heroes, and (8) gratification of specific needs through subcultural institutionalization (p. 244).

Status criteria within the subculture differ from peer group to peer group. Sebald (1992) states that the more the individual gain status in the new group, the more he or she will lose status outside the group. Fasick (1984) suggests that for many adolescents, participation in youth culture activities with peers is the main focus of non-academic activities. The motivation to join and maintain an adolescent subculture does not always stem from adolescent frustration and confusion. Although the concept of subculture has often been negatively viewed, the members are not always questioning the expectations of the parent culture. Winnicott (1971) characterized subcultures as "holding environments" which may help the student build up their self esteem, social skills and self understanding.

Difficulty is experienced when the subculture is maladaptive or if it is a danger or a threat to its parent culture (the global school culture). The desire of an adolescent to identify with a delinquent peer group requires adherence to particular norms of behavior and anti-social behavior may result. Over the years researchers and practitioners alike have been baffled by a proper method of management of delinquent subcultures.

The concern for the school administrator who wishes to alter the climate of his or her school, involves the level of cohesion of the individual subgroups within the school. If the school has many smaller subcultures which are not united with the global school climate, it will be very difficult to implement changes which will be effective for change. An examination of subcultures requires an individual to look at the peer group identity to understand the process of group formation.

Peer Group Identity

Adolescence is a crucial time of socialization within a young person's life. This is the period of time in which individuals in a society are expected to absorb the values, standards, and beliefs that are current in that society (Coleman & Hendry, 1990). In most developed cultures, the school is one of the major agents of socialization. It is expected that the school will transfer the accepted societal norms and expectations to its members. Schunk (1987) offers that the peer group serves to be an essential socializing agency in the lives of adolescents. Sebald (1992) suggests that by the time an individual reaches adolescence, he or she has been conditioned in the skills of group membership, having learned how to get along with peers and do the accepted things.

Adolescence is the period of time in an adolescent's life when he or she spends the least amount of time in the company of adults. It is during this time that the adolescent depends most heavily on the peer group. Erikson (1968) points out that friends offer constructive feedback and information on self-definitions and perceived commitments. The influence of the peer group may be strong enough to provide the nature of one's identity (Sebald, 1992). The peer group offers the adolescent a reference group which provides the members with identity in the eyes of other adolescents. Mitchell (1992) indicates that many adolescents have difficulty imagining themselves being too different from their peers.

Peer groups vary in size and function. An adolescent may be a member of a small clique which is usually defined by common activities (i.e. a study group, or leisure activity) or simply by closely defined friendship. The importance of the clique is that it is the social context in which the teenagers interact with each other. Crowds on the other hand are characterized as the large stereotyped groups (i.e. "jocks", "druggies", "preppies" etc.) which are readily identifiable within a school. Steinberg (1990) indicates that the membership in a crowd is based on reputation and stereotype, rather than on actual friendship or social interaction. An investigation of group memberships within a school will provide a researcher or administrator with insight into the types and quality of interactions within his or her school. In the past researchers have consistently looked toward school climate as a way to improve conditions within a school and keep the young people interested in school.

School Climate

The second purpose of this chapter is to define the concept of school climate, discuss past research findings, and provide an interactive model of the concept (See page 14 for a more detailed definition).

To effectively examine school climate, it is obviously important to define it. School climate is an elusive but powerful concept that has captured the attention of both researchers and practitioners as they struggle with the need to understand and make improvements in schools (Wilson & McGrail, 1987). The concept/metaphor of school climate seems to be verifiable intuitively rather than empirically. This excerpt highlights the problems associated with defining and studying school climate.

> The metaphor of [organizational] climate is certainly a meaningful one for all those who have any connection with school. Pupils, teachers, parents, and visitors to schools would agree that it allows them to make contact with some aspect of their experience of schools.
>
> From my discussion with groups of teachers about the metaphor of [organizational} climate; Taguiri's caution [advocacy that "sense" is more appropriate than "understand"] seems justified. The major point they made was that they are much more confident of the experience of the phenomenon than they are of their understanding of it. . . What is also evident from these discussions of the metaphor is its ambiguity. Individuals make their own sense of the metaphor, yet at the same time they all agree about its meaningfulness for them (Finlayson, 1987, p. 163).

If you were to ask anyone who has spent even a short period of time in different schools; you would be told that each school seems to have its own distinct "feel" or "personality" that can be recognized soon after entering the doors. Halpin and Croft (1963) suggest that "climate" is to the organization, what "personality" is to the individual. Steele and Jenks (1977) describe school climate as the feeling one gets when spending time in that social space, it is the weather in that region of social space. Just as climate, in the meteorological sense, refers to the average weather conditions of a given place over a period of time, climate refers to the perceptions individuals hold about their environment (Dellar & Giddings, 1991). It should be noted that climate may vary from classroom to classroom and perceptions of the climate may vary from person to person within the same environment. Ellis (1988) suggests that the school climate is the aggregate of indicators, both subjective and objective, that convey the overall feeling or impression one gets about a school. For the purpose of this thesis school climate is defined as operationally different from that of the concept of school culture. School climate is the projected "feel" which is perceived by "outsiders" to the school. This feeling is a summation of the individual's perceptions of how school personnel and students behave and interact. The school's culture, in comparison, involves the actual interactions of the members in a school. This concept involves the shared beliefs, values, patterns of behavior, norms, standards, characteristics and traditions experienced within the school. Only the members of the school community can experience the culture of the school. On the other hand, both "insiders" and "outsiders" to the school system are able to perceive the climate.

Even though researchers cannot define it precisely or come to a consensus of conceptualization, school climate has been described in a variety of ways; typologies and classification systems have been devised. The literature becomes somewhat confusing because, as the sample definitions show, some authors use the term in a global sense, whereas others use it synonymously with the concept of "culture". To further complicate the definition of the term, administrators tend to view climate differently than researchers. Practitioners are typically concerned with ways to improve climate than in precise measurement and description of it. Keefe, Kelley, and Miller (1985) suggest that part of the problem and confusion concerned with definition clarification and identification may be that descriptions of school climate do not instruct school administrators as to what to do or what not to do to improve climate. Therefore, the research, although it may be theoretically significant, may have little if any practical value for the school administration. The body of research available at this time is disjointed and requires researchers to investigate many tangents in order to provide a comprehensive exploration of the school climate and associated concepts.

After taking the time to identify and define the concept, an individual may ask what is the importance of school climate. Many researchers have investigated the components which contribute to a healthy climate and why it is essential in the context of a school. Research indicates that a healthy school climate is important because it is associated with higher student achievement, better behavior, and better attitudes (Lindelow & Mazzarella, 1981). One might, for example, describe a school as a "warm, friendly place" or as a "cold, uncaring place"; as supportive and productive, or as manipulative and disorganized (Keefe, Kelley, & Miller, 1985). Student and staff satisfaction and morale is stated to be higher in "healthy" climates compared to "unhealthy" climates. Smey-Richardson and Barkley (1990) indicate that schools with poor or negative (unhealthy) climates may find students with low expectations, lower self-esteem, and a pronounced sense of alienation. Keefe, Kelley, and Miller (1985) suggest that schools with positive (healthy) climates are places where people respect, trust and help one another; and where the school projects a "feeling" that fosters both caring and learning. Such schools are described to exhibit a strong sense of pride, ownership and personal productivity. The students are found to be more enthusiastic, with high expectations for achievement (Smey-Richardson & Barkley, 1990). The healthiness or unhealthiness of the school climate, in turn, impacts the quality of the interactions of the members of that organization. The varied behaviors of the members are largely determined by the underlying norms (culture) in the school, which dictate what kinds of behaviors and interactions are appropriate. Maxwell and Thomas (1991) suggest that norms are concerned with shoulds, oughts, dos and don'ts in an organization. The behaviors and norms within a system tend to be largely self-perpetuating. Thus the culture then ultimately the climate of the school develops in a cyclical/self-perpetuating nature. Lindelow, Mazzarella, Scott, Ellis, and Smith (1989) suggest that an analogy comparing climate to the human personality is useful in an attempt to understand the development of school climate. They state that each person has a self image which dictates how that person behaves. In turn, behavior which is consistent with the individual's self image reinforces the self image, which then dictates future behavior. Investigating the process of school climate development may enable researchers to better understand the concept. The description of a conceptual model may enhance an individual's understanding of the possible composition and interactive qualities of a school's climate.

School Climate: An Interactive Model

Once definitions of school climate are examined, it is then important to identify the dimensions of climate which are functioning within the school. Dellar and Giddings (1991) suggest that the identification of a school's climate along many dimensions may not only contribute to the understanding of a school's functioning, but also help gauge a school's readiness for change and help guide school improvement efforts. One of the first interactive models was characterized by Taguiri in 1968. Taguiri's conceptualization has been considered preferable to other models (Insel & Moos, 1974; Moos, 1974; Anderson, 1982).

Maxwell and Thomas (1991) suggest that an interactive model of school climate provides a deeper understanding of the school's processes.

Taguiri's (1968) taxonomy includes four dimensions:

(1) ecology (physical and material aspects, eg., age and size of building);

(2) the milieu (characteristics of the people);

(3) the social system (relationships of people and groups); and,

(4) the culture (the belief systems, values, and meaning).

Permission for use of this diagram not obtained from author

Taguiri's model (Anderson, 1982, p. 405)

This model has been adopted by many researchers as it suggests that influences on climate and outcome are not one-way.

The model proposes that all dimensions (variables) serve as both dependent and independent factors. There is reciprocal interactions among all dimensions or variables. Although school climate is the conceptual product, this concept also becomes an important variable effecting other dimensions within the school system. This model was one of the first to conceptualize many of the important variables which interact to construct the essence of school climate.

Most researchers agree that outcomes stem from the combined characteristics of interacting variables; the difficulty comes in choosing the variables that best explain [individual] climates (Tornatzky, Brookover, Hathaway, Miller, & Passalacqua, 1980). Although Taguiri's interactive model (1968) continues to be referenced as a basis for current research involving school climate, it lacks an integrative conciseness. The dimension of milieu (characteristics of people) and the dimension of social system (relationships of people) should be integrated into one dimension. The characteristics of the people are an integral part of the relationships among the people and groups within the school and should be considered as the membership dimension of school climate.

Although Taguiri's dimension of ecology is an important consideration in the conceptualization of an interactive model, a discussion of this aspect is beyond the scope of this thesis. The discussion of the physical aspects of school climate have been set aside at this time to allow the author to focus the discussion on the student contributions in the evolution of a school's climate. The dimension of membership is addressed and discussed throughout the exploration of culture and subculture which follows in this thesis.

One of the most important dimensions identified within this model is that of the school's climate. It has a dual role interacting as a variable as well as a conceptual product. The quality of the climate will impact the outcome of the interactions within the organization.

> In a broad sense, [organizational] climate is the product of every aspect of an organization, the nature of the work that goes on there, the people, the architecture and surroundings, the history of the organization, the administrative policies in effect, and especially, the patterns of interaction and communication among the members of the organization (Lindelow & Mazzarella, 1981).

Lastly, the dimension of culture identified in Taguiri's model, as introduced earlier, involves the interactions of the members of the community. Harris (1986) best defines culture as "the learned socially acquired traditions and life styles of the members of a society (organization), including their patterned, repetitive ways of thinking, feeling, and acting (i.e., behaving)"

(p. 6). Deal and Kennedy (1983) suggest that school culture is an informal understanding of the "way we do things around here" (p. 15). These definitions call attention to an important aspect of the concept that culture is shared knowledge. Regardless of the description used, underlying the cultural perspective is the concept of a defined community and the importance of their shared values and understandings. It is carried in the minds of organizational members, learned by newcomers, and amenable to change, albeit with difficulty (Kottkamp, 1984; Schein, 1985). Culture is often informal and implicit -- often the unconscious side of school. According to Smircich (1983) culture fulfills several functions within a system. It provides a sense of identity for members, it facilitates the generation of commitment to something larger than oneself, serves to guide and shape behavior, and it enhances social system stability. School culture expresses itself in the peculiar and distinctive ways in which the various individuals or groups interact during time spent at school or in activities related to the school. Another method in which to gain understanding of a concept such as school climate is to consider the theoretical perspectives which may be applicable to explanation of the formation and maintenance of school climate.

Theories Related to School Climate

Many dimensions of school climate have been proposed, but they have yet to be synthesized into widely accepted theoretical frameworks (Anderson,1982; Gottfredson et al.,1986; Stockard, 1985; Strivens, 1985). Anderson (1982) states that one way to account for differences in the climate descriptions is to focus on specific theoretical perspectives. This is one more factor which impedes the development of conceptual consensus in the body of research. There are a number of theoretical perspectives which may be applied to the study of school climate. The following perspectives have been identified to understand the development and maintenance of school climate, as well as exploration of possible avenues for change.

Input/Output Theory

An input/output theory (Brimer, Madaus, Chapman, Kellaghan, & Wood, 1978) has been suggested to explain the variations of climate. The school is viewed as a organization which converts inputs into outputs. ". . . inadequate output calls for more of some input variable (money, time, materials, teaching techniques, etc.)" (Anderson, 1982, p.379). From this viewpoint the differences in schools may be accounted for by the resources which they have available to them. This theory has been criticized because of its simplistic view of the school. It does not adequately deal with either the complexities of school influences, or interaction of the school (Barr & Dreeben, 1977). The author of the present study supports the stance of the theory's critics. Although the resources available to the school can enhance the environment, the additions do not always provide lasting changes. To attempt to implement lasting change, the interactions of the community members must be explored.

Systems Theory

Other researchers suggest that the school is presented as a cultural system of social relationships among family, teachers, students and peers (Brookover & Erickson, 1975; Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Reavis, 1979). Student behavior is viewed to be a function of the social processes of the school. Research examines how these relationships act to meet educational goals. The school's success or failure is therefore a product of the relationships. In systems theory a school is considered to be an open system which interacts with its environment (Katz and Kahn, 1978). This position states that if a change is experienced anywhere within the system, it will impact the organization and its members. The school's culture and, in turn, climate may be impacted by any new memberships or changes in the school system. This approach has also been identified as a sociological theory by some school climate researchers.

Social Learning Theory

This theory proposes that school climate is maintained because individuals within the school learn what is expected of them as members. This theory involves either a systematic or haphazard process which involves identification with a model and then modelling the behaviors of the model (Bandura, 1977). Most of the behaviors that people display have been learned, either deliberately or unintentionally through modelling. The learned behaviors are then reinforced when the organization provides encouragement for the appropriate responses. Bandura's theory of reciprocal determinism proposes that human behavior is mutually determined by interactions with the environment (1986). When applied to a school setting, this theory proposes that the members and the school environment mutually influence each other. In the process of reciprocal interactions, people learn to predict events and make anticipating reactions to events. In short, students within a school are able to quickly identify what is expected of them. Bigge and Shermis (1992) suggest that within the reciprocal interaction process, the same event or variable (such as school climate) can be a stimulus, a response, or an environmental reinforcer. Another theory which has similar attributes to learning theory is that of Lewin's (1951) field theory.

Field Theory

Lewin (1951) also suggests that behavior is viewed as a function of interaction between the individual and his or her environment. The most important consideration in Lewin's theory is the manner in which an individual perceives his or her environment. Guest (1984) indicates that a key feature of all individual behavior is the social environment and the various groups to which an individual belongs. In apparently the same situation a person at different times may perceive different aspects of a situation and behave according to that perception (Bigge & Shermis, 1992). These authors suggest that an individual interprets everything in terms of a situation as a whole. Any negative interactions or situations within the school may be attributed to the school by the student.

Ecological Theory

This theory attempts to explore the ecological nature of the school, "the functioning of the entire system" (Goodlad, 1975, p. 203) and views all variables as potentially modifiable for the benefit of student outcomes. The ecological approach attempts to involve the social processes, the physical aspects of the school environment as well as the resources of the input/output theory. Anderson (1982) states that in the area of school climate research this approach has slowly become eclipsed by sociological theory (systems theory).

Although no one theory proposes the process that the author of the present study envisions about school climate, the ecological theory attempts to introduce all important components, but does not effectively integrate them. A more appropriate theory describing school climate would integrate essential components from each of the theories introduced in this section. The opportunity and agent for change within a system that is introduced by systems theory is essential in an adaptive theory. Social learning theory emphasizes that there is a reciprocal interaction between the individual and the environment. This approach suggests that each variable should be considered when attempting to make changes. Field theory introduces the importance of acknowledging the effect of an individual's perceptions on his or her interactions. The ecological theory attempts to link the physical attributes to the social processes of the school. All of the above theoretical considerations account for the interactions, movement and change within a school. Although it is not "practically" possible to isolate the social processes of a school's climate from the physical attributes, the primary focus of the remainder of this thesis involves the perceptions of the students within the school system.

Up to this point, the discussion in this chapter has identified processes and concepts which influence student attitudes and behavior. A more specific exploration of activities which may impact the students' school experience is also required in an investigation of factors which influence student involvement and participation in a school. Past research has identified participation in extracurricular activities and/or part-time employment as influential activities in students' lives.

Other Influential Factors

Extracurricular Activities

In their study, The Good School, King and Peart (1990) suggested that extracurricular activities make school more meaningful for both students and teachers.

> Extracurricular activities can help students identify with their school, and participation encourages them to socialize and become friends with fellow students; all these factors contribute to good 'school spirit' (p. 75).

In the same study, King and Peart (1990) state that extracurricular activities offer students who do not do well academically the opportunity to be successful in other aspects of school life. In an earlier study, King and Peart (1986) revealed in their research findings that students who participate in extracurricular activities are more positively disposed to other aspects of school experience than the students who are not involved.

Part-time Employment

Another activity which has been identified as an important consideration in an investigation of a student's level of school involvement is that of part-time employment. Levine and Havighurst (1989) indicate that employment of high school students has been perceived as desirable because it provides the young people with income, reduces dependency, offers an opportunity to learn about work and develop habits and skills which will be transferable for later employment. King and Peart (1989) caution that students who work have less time for homework, assignments and extracurricular activities. In an earlier study King and Peart (1986) concluded that students who do not work part-time are less likely to participate in extracurricular activities than those who work up to fourteen hours a week, but students who work fifteen or more hours a week are also less likely to participate. This study suggests that there is a point at which many students are able to balance the activities of work and extracurricular involvement. Overall, both extracurricular involvement and part-time employment have been viewed as activities which enhance the students school experience in a positive manner if the hours are balanced according to the requirements of school. The negative side of this discussion involves students who are unable to keep the activities in balance may begin to experience difficulty in school and may have to withdraw from the extracurricular involvement. Another more pressing concern for students who are involved in many activities is the quality of their school work. In an attempt to identify differences in ability to balance activities, researchers would have to address individual student accounts to determine the differences.

Most commonly, when a researcher addresses the "student's" experience in a school he or she is speaking in a manner which integrates all of the individual students into one or two descriptive categories. For ease of reporting and understanding, researchers have often stereotyped groups of students. Although it may seem that all the students in one group are similar, a closer inspection may discover that it may be possible to gain more insight into the uniqueness of individual adolescent experience. This author proposes that more research should be initiated which will consider individual experiences of students. The uniqueness of an individual's experience is developed from his or her perceptions of the situation or experience.

Perceptions and Attitudes

Perceptions

The ways in which people interpret their world may be defined as their perceptions. Johnson (1987) indicated that according to Shaver (1981), there was a consensus in the literature that perception is the understanding of the world that one constructs from data obtained through the senses. Adler and Towne (1990) state that the process of perceiving involves selecting what will be perceived, organizing the data in a meaningful way, and interpreting the experience. The authors caution that interpretations are not always accurate; but whether they are correct or not, they shape one's thoughts and behaviors. This point is essential to consider when one examines the importance of student's perceptions within a school culture.

Brookover and Erickson (1975) state that while there is evidence that students' perceptions of others' expectations and evaluations for self are highly correlated with the actual expectations and evaluation of these others, there is often some communication failure. The authors also suggest that individuals behave in terms of what they perceive of others and not solely in terms of the actual expectations and assessments that others hold. Past research has identified several perceptual errors which can lead to inaccurate conclusions. Hamachek (1982) cautions that the following five errors may incorrectly influence perceptions: (1) we are influenced by what is most obvious, (2) we cling to first impressions, even if wrong, (3) we tend to assume others are similar to us, (4) we tend to favor negative impressions of others over positive ones, and (5) we blame innocent victims for their misfortunes. As students are functioning in a school, one or more of these errors could influence their experiences within the system. Whether the students' perceptions are accurate or not, they form the basis of the attitudes which the students will hold in relation to a situation, person, or organization.

Student Attitudes

Anderson (1985) suggests that attitudes of a student's peer group are another important source of individual attitudes and behaviors. The term attitude generally refers to an evaluation or emotional response to some object or situation (Lippa, 1990).

Baron and Graziano (1991) also state that most attitudes are learned and relatively enduring attributes. Adolescents and their friends tend to be similar in their attitudes toward school and their achievement. Student attitudes/beliefs are very important to consider when examining the interactions within a school. By equating the student-school relationship to a person-person relationship it is easier to grasp the dynamic this study is attempting to investigate. If a person is engaged in a relationship with someone he or she does not like or trust, it will be very difficult for the individual to put aside the negative perceptions and attitudes in order to receive any positive message the other person may offer. This process is very similar to the situation experienced by many students who have developed negative perceptions/attitudes about school. The positive message/interventions are very unlikely to reach the students unless the intervening personnel are able to disengage some the existing negative perceptions/attitudes.

Summary

School climate is the "feel" an individual senses from his or her experiences within a school's social system. A school's climate appears to be the key factor in determining its "success or failure as a place of learning" (Purkey & Smith, 1983, p. 449). Healthy school climates have been linked to improved student achievement, behavior and attitudes. An increasing amount of research indicates that the structures of social interaction and behavior in the school influence the student outcomes. The concept of school climate improvement does not de-emphasize skills, attitudes, and knowledge students gain through academic studies, it suggests that the most efficient learning programs occur in a wholesome and humane climate. Much of the interest in improved school climate has been linked with the dropout phenomenon which has been plaguing school districts for many decades. Researchers and practitioners alike must continue to work to discover intervention strategies which may be implemented to disrupt this negative process. The requirement in schools at this time is for all of those concerned to give special attention to the improvement of the "collective personality" of the social system and make school a more enticing place for all students. Although such attention will not likely achieve results immediately, it will initiate gradual improvement in personal interactions, which in turn will result in a healthier school climate. Schools must try to nourish certain perceptions, attitudes, and perspectives that all school members hold in common (Newmann, Rutter, and Smith, 1989). A school administrator must approach change with the understanding that most attitudes are enduring which means change will take time and that attitudes are learned which means there is potential to change the negative attitudes.

The focus of this study is to conceptually operationalize the concept of school climate. At the outset, the author of the present study proposed that school climate was a projected image resulting from the interactions of members within a school system. The results of the study are integrated into a discussion which will provide a connection between the perceptions/attitudes the students hold from their interactions within the school to the related research which has been dealt with in this section of the thesis. The methodological and research considerations of the present study are outlined and discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The research design which was utilized to construct the present study is presented in this chapter. A description of the procedure, sample, measure, and analysis of the data are provided. The purpose of this study was to examine students' perceptions and attitudes regarding their educational process and, more specifically, the "feel" of the their experience in high school. The students were asked to respond to a series of questions relating to many facets of school climate described in the literature review. A questionnaire, developed specifically for this study, was administered to respondents by the researcher during the students' regularly scheduled classes.

Participants

The school chosen for this study is an urban Alberta composite high school which had a multicultural student population of approximately six hundred and twenty students in the 1992-1993 school year. The school offers both advanced- and general-level courses. In the past, modifications had been made to the school's curriculum to attract more interest and involvement from the student population. As well as offering a variety of courses, including business education and shop, the school is host to a large English as a Second Language program and a program for students with varying levels of disabilities.

The students have the opportunity to choose from a variety of extracurricular and intramural activities which are offered at noon time and after school. A peer support team has been operating within the school for approximately three years (School counsellor, personal communications, May 1993).

The school was selected because the school administration had implemented an attendance improvement program in the 1991-1992 school year. At this time, absenteeism had become a major concern because the school's dropout rate had become approximately double that of the school system's average dropout rate (School publication, personal communications, May 1992).

The sample consisted of 279 students in grades 10 - 12. Questionnaires were administered to 284 students, but five questionnaires were incomplete and therefore not used in the data analysis. There were 128 males and 151 females in the sample; representing various ethnic backgrounds, their ages ranged from 15 to 20. The 279 students were registered in several sections of a combination English/Social Studies class involving the curricular levels of 10, 13, 20, 23, 30, 33. For the purposes of this study, the 96 students in the 13, 23, and 33 classes were considered to be in the general stream and the 183 students in the 10, 20, and 30 classes were considered to be in the academic stream. Within the grouping of academic and general streams, the students were members of either regular curriculum classes or classes which required more self direction and self motivation on the part of the student. For ease of understanding within this thesis these classes are differentiated by letter labels - the regular curriculum classes are identified with the letter "A" and the self directed classes are labelled with the letter "B". Given this extra classification, there were 89 students in the general "A" classes and 7 students in the general "B" classes. The academic stream included 116 students in the academic "A" courses and 67 students in the academic "B" courses.

Research Instrument

Development

The research instrument which was used to collect the data for this study was developed by the investigator. The instrument was based on information from other researchers who have conducted similar research studies within the areas of school climate and school improvement (Epstein & McPartland, 1976; Finlayson, 1987; Gottsfredson, Hybl, Gottfredson, & Castaneda, 1986; Halpin & Croft, 1963; Howard, 1980; Lindelow & Mazzarella, 1987; Maxwell & Thomas, 1991; Moos, 1979; Smey-Richman, 1991; Stern, 1961; Trickett & Moos, 1973; Walberg, 1969). The literature review also provided the investigator with information about the relationships found in previous studies between various variables and their influence or contribution to school climate. The researcher examined the existing research to isolate recurring themes and common constructs which were identified as important components of school climate. From the information gathered, a pool of questions was formulated and reformulated until the investigator felt confident that the items included the variables identified in the literature. The final draft of the questionnaire was analyzed and critiqued by a member of the Center For Research In Applied Measurement and Evaluation (CRAME), within the Faculty of Education, University of Alberta.

To ensure the instrument and proposed procedure met with the university's ethical standards the questionnaire was reviewed by the Department of Educational Psychology Ethics and Review Committee. Once approval to conduct the study was obtained, a pilot study involving a convenience sample of ten students from the high school was completed. As a result of feedback from the students involved in the pilot study, any items which were identified as being vague or confusing were modified. The reading level was deemed appropriate, and the questions were found to be free of unnecessary technical jargon.

Content

The instrument, a paper and pencil questionnaire, consisted of 14 demographic survey questions and 75 Likert Scale questions (see Appendix C). The students were asked to read a statement and then indicate how much they agreed or disagreed with it. The respondents were given five descriptive choices consisting of "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", Neither Agree nor Disagree", "Agree", and "Strongly Agree". The questionnaire was developed to include two major sections.

In the first section (questions 1-14), the demographic information data is presented to identify individual differences among the students in the sample. The questions pertain to the respondents gender, age, ethnic membership, involvement in school activities, and future aspirations (see questionnaire, Appendix C).

Section II of the questionnaire is divided into four themes: (1) Self, (2) I think, (3) Others think, and (4) Program Attitude. Questions 15-54 were asked to investigate what the students thought of themselves, their achievements, participation, and pride in personal relationships and at school. For identification within the data analysis section of this thesis these questions are grouped together and labelled "Self". Questions 55-65 were asked to examine the students attitudes about different aspects of their school and school experience. For analysis purposes this segment of the questionnaire is grouped together and identified as "I Think". Questions 66-76 required the students to answer the same questions as 55-65, but to answer as they thought their peers would answer. This grouping of questions is labelled "Others Think". These questions sought to explore the hypothesis that the students believed their attitudes about the school were different from the rest of the students. Questions 77-89 surveyed the students attitudes about the school improvement program which was in progress at the time of this study. This segment of questions is labelled "Program Attitude" for the analysis discussion. Lastly, questions 90-93 consisted of open-ended statements which solicited unstructured student feedback. The four questions were examined to determine if any themes or patterns emerged from the student responses. The results from these questions are addressed in the results section of this thesis.

Data Collection

Once approval to conduct the study had been granted from the Department of Educational Psychology Research and Ethics Committee, permission was obtained from the school board and the school principal (see Appendix A). A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the format and content of the questionnaire. Approximately three weeks later, with the assistance of the school counsellor, permission was obtained from the teachers to use designated classroom time to conduct the study. The combination English/Social classes were chosen to survey as many students as possible within the school. The questionnaire was explained and administered to the students by the researcher. It was stressed that participation was entirely voluntary, and that subjects could withdraw at any stage, should they desire. Complete anonymity was assured. The survey took between twenty and thirty minutes to complete. Once the exercise was completed all participants were thanked, and the respondents' questions were answered. The questionnaires were administered to all participants at the same time in the school year to avoid any historical or maturation effect.

Data Analysis

The descriptive nature of the design of this study is primarily concerned with finding out 'what is' (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 331). The objective of this research is to identify and describe possible relationships which emerge from the data and literature review. The investigation is not concerned with a causal analysis of the research variables.

Questionnaires were scored and analyzed primarily using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences - Revised (SPSSx). Data were analyzed in a number of stages. Missing data were coded in such a manner that it would be excluded from the computer analysis. Descriptive data were calculated for all sections of the questionnaire. Data from the student surveys were tabulated to determine the percent of the population that selected each response. Descriptive statistics were examined to determine the mean, median, and standard deviation of each variable.

Group means and standard deviations were computed for the four theme sections of the questionnaire. The initial analysis was conducted to determine if there was any significant difference between the students in the academic and the students in the general stream. The second analysis was carried out to see if there were any significant differences between students in the number of years they had been in high school. The third breakdown involved the variable of gender to identify if there was any difference between male and female attitudes about their school and school experience. Involvement in extracurricular activities was examined to investigate the possible relationships between participation in school activities and perceptions of school climate. The last examination completed in this stage of the analysis involved the variable of student employment. This investigation considered any differences among those students who were employed and those who were not. Specifically, the calculations were completed to determine whether significant differences were noted when the questionnaire theme sections were analyzed in relation to the demographic variables of academic stream, gender, years spent in high school, employment, and involvement in extracurricular activities.

In order to test for patterns and relationships within the data, other statistical procedures were used. Three one-way analysis of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to identify significant relationships among some of the demographic variables. Only those variables which included more than two groups (years in high school, age, and academic route) were analyzed in this manner. Lastly, overall sample means were calculated for the two theme sections of the "I think" and "Others think". The group means were then compared by t-test analysis to determine if the relationship between the two means were statistically significant.

Delimitations

One small urban high school that had a school improvement program was surveyed. The student population was questioned about their beliefs and attitudes concerning their school experience. Lastly, this study was intended to be descriptive rather than causal comparative.

Limitations of this Study

The author of this study does not attempt a causal analysis and relies on exploratory correlational techniques. However, identification of predictive relationships might provide a starting point for future research under more controlled conditions to investigate the possibility of causality.

The generalizability of these results across different samples and time periods is uncertain and limited by the use of one urban high school in Alberta. Generalization to other subjects would have to be done with caution. An attempt was made to survey a population, the entire student body of the high school. However, on the data collection days, not all classes which had been identified by the school counsellor were made available to the researcher. Therefore, the students surveyed are more correctly considered a sample, albeit a large one, approximately 50% of the student body. This sample was also limited to the students who were both present and willing to participate at the time of data collection. If one considers the true population to also include those students who have dropped out of the high school, then certainly this study involves a sample, a self-selected one.

When a self-report measure by a volunteer sample is used in a research study, the investigators usually note concern about validity because the subjects may not report their true feelings, attitudes, or perceptions in favor of more socially desirable responses. A judgement about the validity of student response is not a concern of the present study. The student report offers the student a method of providing his or her opinions in an anonymous manner. It is assumed that the responses would be an accurate report of the students perceptions. As suggested earlier, only the student can determine the accuracy of his or her attitudes and responses. The beliefs the student holds creates and maintains his or her experience within the school. In order to involve student opinions in school improvement, researchers must examine what is offered and accept it as valid for that individual. As more studies of this nature are completed these viewpoints will strengthen this body of research within the literature.

At this time it is important to restate the focus of the current study. The author chose to survey only student responses. This decision limits the amount of information which could be utilized to investigate the climate within a school. The opinions of the administration, teachers, parents, and community members are very important but, they are beyond the scope of this study.

Lastly, the instrument which was developed for this study was designed to survey a number of different variable areas. As this study was designed to be descriptive in nature, no analysis of internal consistency was completed regarding the questionnaire. The reliability of the instrument was untested because the questionnaire was developed to collect data from one specific school at one given period in time. A portion of the questionnaire surveyed issues which were unique to this school. If it were to be used again, it would have to be restructured to meet the needs of the schools to be surveyed. It is also unknown if the results would different if the questionnaire was administered at a different time in the school year.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed by the researcher at the beginning of the study:

1. Is a difference noted in the attitudes and perceptions of school experiences for the general-level students in comparison to the academic-level students?

2. Is gender a differentiating factor in positive or negative student perceptions?

3. Does a relationship exist between the students' ages and/or the number of years in high school and the perceptions of school experience?

4. Is there a relationship between student employment and students' attitudes towards themselves and school?

5. Does a negative or positive relationship exist between the student's involvement in extracurricular activities and the student's perceptions of his or her school experience?

6. What impact, if any, does this specific school improvement program have on the attitudes of the students within the school?

7. Does there seem to be a difference in what the individual student perceives compared to what they think other students in the system perceive?

The research design and methodology described in this chapter was utilized to obtain data analysis of which is presented in the following chapter. A discussion of the data and how it relates to the existing literature and research is conducted in Chapter V. Recommendations with respect for future research is also addressed within this section.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The results of the survey are presented in this chapter. Data from the student questionnaires were tabulated by computer to determine the percent of the sample that selected each response. Means for each of the responses were also calculated where applicable. The demographic data which establishes a profile of the sample is presented in the first section of this chapter. In the second section, group means and standard deviations are presented. These sets of data were calculated for the four theme sections of the questionnaire and analyzed in relation to the demographic categories of academic stream, gender, years spent in high school, part-time employment, and involvement in extracurricular activities. The results of a series of t-test calculations and ANOVAs which were conducted to determine significance of relationships among the questionnaire theme sections and demographic variables are provided in the last section. The findings of the study are presented in graphic and tabular form throughout this chapter.

Profile of the Sample

Gender

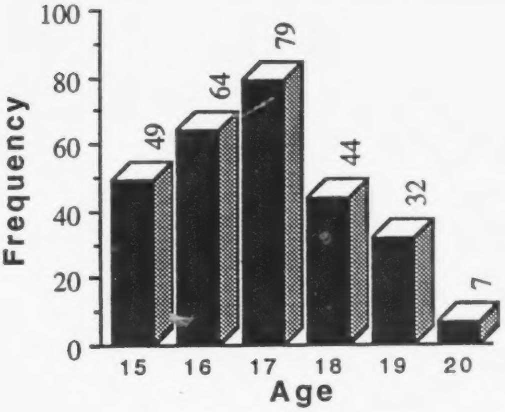
The sample surveyed in this study consisted of 179 students: 151, or 54.1% female and 128 or 45.9% male.

The student sample has been categorized by the number of years the students have spent in high school rather than classification of students by grade level. At the high school level, students may be enrolled in various classifications or levels of courses in any given year or their program of studies (for example 13, 23, 33, or 10, 20, 30). Also in recent years, many students have chosen to take an extra year to upgrade courses before entering post secondary training. In addition, some students choose to take time off before returning to complete their high school education. Given all of these factors, it is increasingly difficult to provide a grade label to a large portion of any given high school population. To increase the understanding of the results, the author of the current study has chosen to classify and discuss the student sample according to age and years spent in high school.

Age

The mean age of the total sample was 16.8 years, with the ages of the students ranging from 15 to 20 years of age.

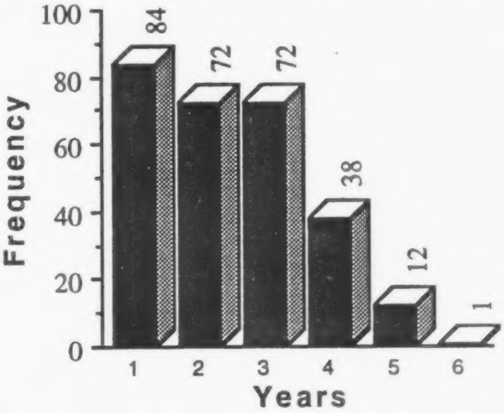
Figure 1. Age of Respondents



Number of Years in High School

The distribution of the sample by the number of years the students have spent in high school. It is interesting to note that 18.3% (51 students) in the sample have been in school for more than three years.

Figure 2. Number of Years in High School



Distribution of Students By Academic Stream

The 279 students in this sample were registered in several sections of a combination English/Social Studies class including the curricular levels of 10, 13, 20, 23, 30, 33. For the purposes of this study the students registered in 13, 23, and 33 classes were considered to be in the general stream and the students attending 10, 20, and 30 classes were considered to be in the academic stream. These curricular streams were classified according to one further criterion. Within the general and academic streams, the students were member of either regular curriculum classes or classes which required more self-direction and self-motivation on the part of the student.

Table 1. Distribution of students by academic stream.

Class Level	Number of Students	Percentage of Student Sample
10 A[1]	63	22.6%
10 B[2]	33	11.8%
13 A	32	11.5%
20 A	24	8.6%
20 B	20	7.2%
23 A	27	19.6%
30 A	24	8.6%
30 B	14	11.8%
33 A	24	8.6%
33 B	7	2.5%
Misc[3]	11	3.9%

[1] A denotes regular curriculum classes

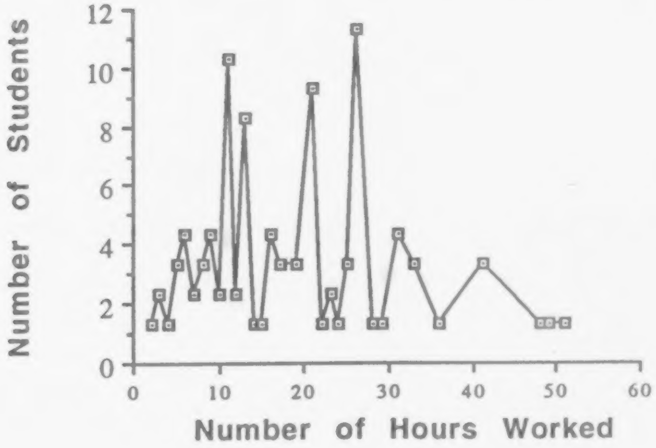
[2] B denotes classes with more student self-direction

[3] Misc denotes students who did not identify route

Part-time Employment While Attending High School

Within the sample surveyed for this study 98 (35.1%) students were involved in some type of part-time employment. The number of hours worked ranged from 1 to 50 hours per week. The two most commonly reported numbers of hours worked were 10 and 25 hours a week. Approximately 7% (16 students) in the sample worked more than 25 hours a week while attending school.

Figure 3. Range of Number of Hours Worked Per Week



Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

The questions in this portion of the survey addressed whether or not the students participated in extracurricular activities associated with the school. The extracurricular activities offered at the school included sports, music, drama, clubs, intramural sports, student council, a peer support team, and various school functions. The results of the survey indicated that 158 (56.8%) of the students engaged in some form of the before mentioned extracurricular activities.

Questionnaire Theme Analysis

The analysis in this section of the thesis serves to explore the relationship between membership in the outlined demographic categories and students' perceptions or attitudes. For this analysis the questionnaire item grouping method detailed in Chapter III of this thesis was utilized (refer to pages 57-58 for a more detailed description of the item groupings). The section themes are identified as follows in the analysis and discussion of the data:

1. "Self" -- Items which asked what the students think of themselves, their achievements, participation and pride in personal relationships and at school.

2. "I Think" -- Respondent student attitudes concerning various aspects of his or her school and school experience.

3. "Others Think" -- Respondent student perceptions of other students' attitudes concerning various aspects their school experience.

4. "Program Attitude" -- Survey of student perceptions and attitudes involving a current school improvement program within the school.

For the purpose of the discussion of the results, the categories are presented in a different order than they appear in the questionnaire (see Appendix C). The discussion of "Self" is followed by the exploration of "Program Attitude" and then the results of the categories "I think" and "Others think" are presented. This adjustment has been made to discuss and display the data more effectively. The group means which are used in the presentation of the results are based on a five point Likert scale. The higher numbers indicate a more positive response which are interpreted by the researcher to be a more positive attitude.

The discussion of the results of this study unfolds in two phases. The initial discussion examines the four theme sections in relation to the demographic categories. The results of this exploration are then considered in the context of the research questions which are outlined in Chapter III of this thesis.

Section Themes

The following analysis was completed to examine the demographic categories in relation to the various sections of the questionnaire. Each of the sections identified have been evaluated concerning the categories of academic stream, gender, years spent in high school, part-time employment, and involvement in extracurricular activities as identified in the research questions. This examination was completed to identify any significant difference identified upon differentiation of questionnaire theme sections by the different demographic categories.

The tables of results which follow in this section must be viewed with caution. Although most of the tables present statistical differences between variables, it is important to examine whether or not the difference noted is conceptually or realistically important or significant. A difference which is deemed to be statistically significant may not make any difference when the results are considered in a practical sense within the school context.

Self

Within this section there was no difference noted between the means of the male and female respondents regarding their attitudes concerning themselves. The data from the demographic categories of academic route, student age, and years spent in high school also provide no significant patterns.

The categories of involvement in extracurricular activities and part-time employment provided results which are presented in the following tables.

Table 2. Mean scores of the Self subscale in relation to student involvement in extracurricular activities.

	Mean	S. D.	N
Involved	**3.5368***	.3583	158
Not Involved	3.4014	.3892	120
Average	3.4783	.3773	

*$p > .05$

The data presented in this table indicate that the students who are involved in extracurricular activities rate their attitudes about themselves to be more positive than students who are not involved in school activities.

Table 3. Mean scores of the Self subscale in relation to student employment while in school.

	Mean	S.D.	N
Employed	**3.5328***	.3309	98
Not Employed	3.4496	.3972	181
Average	3.4788	.3767	

*$p > .05$

In regards to employment, the students who were involved in some type of part-time employment indicated, on average, a more positive attitude about themselves.

Program Attitude

There were no significant relationships noted for the subscale of program attitude in relation to the demographic categories of gender, academic route, student age, student employment, and years spent in high school. The analysis of program attitude in relation to involvement in extracurricular activities provided figures that indicated statistical significance.

Table 4. Mean scores of the Program Attitude in relation to student involvement in extracurricular activities.

	Mean	S.D.	N
Involved	**3.3540***	.5252	157
Not Involved	3.2107	.5054	120
Average	3.2919	.5207	

**p.> .05*

The respondents who indicated involvement in some form of extracurricular activity rated their attitudes to be more positive towards the school improvement program than the students who were not involved.

Two Themes Compared

The two sections, "I think" and "Others think", that include questions about students' opinions about their school and their school experience are presented and discussed together. Separately the two sections do not relevant information. However, when the responses in the sections are compared in relation to the demographic categories, significant patterns begin to emerge from the data. Although the numerical differences in means are small, the overall pattern which is identified within this analysis is practically important to this study. An overall test of significance between the two scales is presented at the beginning of this section. These findings are followed by an examination of the demographic variables in relation to the two subscales.

Test of Significance

A t-test analysis was conducted to determine significance of the relationship between the two sections of "I think" and "Others think" for the entire sample of students. The parallel structure of the "I think" and "Others think" scales made a comparison of subscale means possible. The null hypothesis stated that no difference would be found. However, a statistical difference was found showing that the students' personal opinions of their school and school experience were more favorable than their view of the general reputation of the school.

The pairing of the subscales "I think" and "Others think" provided both statistical and practical significance in this study. The questions within the two sections required the students to answer identical questions from two different points of view. The "I think" section served to identify the students' personal attitudes and beliefs and the questions involved in "Others think" surveyed the students' perceptions of their peers attitudes and beliefs. The students perceptions of their peers attitudes were consistently rated lower than their own ratings of satisfaction with their school and school experience. A discussion addressing these findings is presented in the final chapter of this thesis.

Table 5 Test of significance among the subscales "I think" and "Others think".

Mean Difference	S.D.
0.1244	.393

**p>.001*

The analysis of the demographic variables of student gender, academic route, involvement in extracurricular activities, years spent in high school and student age in relation to the subscales "I think" and "Others think" are displayed and discussed in the following section. The analysis of the variable of student employment in relation to student responses concerning the subscales "I think" and "Others think" did not provide any significant relationships. The results of these findings are discussed in more detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

Table 6. A comparison of mean scores of the subscales "I think" and "Others think" in relation to the variable of student gender.

	"I think"			"Others think"	
	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Male	128	3.0060	.6513	2.8983	.6845
Female	151	**3.1924***	.6815	**3.0500***	.6442
Average		**3.1069**	.6815	2.9807	.6660

*p>.05

The male respondents rate both their own opinions and the opinions of their peers to be lower than the female respondents of this sample. The average mean indicates that the entire sample perceives the attitudes of their peers to be less positive than their own.

Table 7. A comparison of mean scores of the subscales "I think" and "Others think" in relation to the student involvement in extracurricular activities.

	"I think"			"Others think"	
	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Involved	158	3.1968	.6738	3.0095	.6742
Not Involved	120	2.9915	.6589	2.9397	.6577
Average		**3.1082***	.6740	2.9793	.6668

*p>.05

Overall, the students attributed more negative school perceptions to their peers. The students who are involved in extracurricular activities rate their perceptions of their school and school experience to be more positive than the students who do not participate in extracurricular activities.

Table 8. A comparison of mean scores of the subscales "I think" and "Others think" in relation to the academic route

		"I think"		"Others think"	
	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
10 A[1]	63	2.9757	.6399	2.9034	.5820
10 B[2]	33	3.2700	.5267	3.1136	.5943
13 A	32	3.1822	.7114	3.0600	.6441
20 A	24	3.3295	.8192	3.1174	.7711
20 B	20	3.2618	.7007	3.0718	.8363
23 A	27	2.8855	.5195	2.8552	.6620
30 A	24	3.2682	.6341	3.1102	.5864
30 B	14	3.6494	.5347	3.2422	.6049
33 A	24	2.7159	.5417	2.7841	.5440
33 B	7	3.2156	.9891	2.6694	.5608
Misc[3]	11	2.6694	.5608	2.4876	.6939
Average		**3.1069***	.6731	2.9807	.6660

[1] A denotes regular curriculum classes

[2] B denotes classes with more student self-direction

[3] Misc denotes students who did not identify route

**p*>.05

Once again the average means suggest that the students in the various curricular levels perceive their peers to hold more negative attitudes than themselves concerning their school and school experience. No notable patterns emerged from the analysis of the academic-level students. The general-level student data provided a pattern which indicates that the student attitudes or perceptions gradually become less positive as the students are promoted to the next grade level. An exception to this statement was noted on the "I think" subscale for the 33 B and the 30 B participants. It is important to note the this group is smaller in number than the others to which it is compared. The standard deviation indicates that the variability of student responses was quite large for these groups.

Table 9. A comparison of mean scores of the subscales "I think" and "Others think" in relation to the student years spent in high school.

		"I think"		"Others think"	
	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
1 Year	84	3.2218	.6193	3.0760	.5911
2 Years	71	3.0412	.6840	2.9017	.7502
3 Years	72	3.1551	.6932	3.0077	.6733
4 Years	38	2.9421	.6462	2.9866	.5885
5 Years	12	2.8788	.8371	2.5758	.7490
6 Years	1	3.7273	.0000	3.2727	.0000
Average		**3.1069***	.6731	2.9807	.6660

**p>.05*

Once again, the average means extracted from this analysis identify the significant finding that the students perceive the attitudes of their peers to be less positive than their own. Also, although it did not prove to be statistically significant, a pattern of declining positive attitudes was noted within the "I think" subscale. With the exception of the one individual who has been in high school for six years, the data shows a progressive decrease with each year the students attend high school. The data for the "Others think" subscale did not provide any notable patterns in relation to the numbers of years the students have spent in high school.

Table 10. A comparison of mean scores of the subscales "I think" and "Others think" in relation to the student age.

		"I think"		"Others think"	
Age	N	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
15	49	3.2022	.5324	3.0557	.4986
16	63	3.0547	.7731	2.8806	.7809
17	79	3.0801	.6693	2.9425	.6335
18	44	3.0264	.5776	2.9946	.6921
19	32	3.2081	.7324	3.0834	.7056
20	7	3.1948	.7810	3.1948	.7300
Average		**3.1052***	.6678	2.9798	.6684

*$p > .05$

Although the average mean difference indicated that the students perceive the opinions of their peers about their school to be more negative, there was no significant pattern in the results that could be explored further in relation to the students' ages.

Research Questions

The following discussion is based upon the research questions which were formulated from areas of relevant literature at the beginning this study.

Research Question 1:

Is a difference noted in the attitudes and perceptions of school experiences for the general-level students in comparison to the academic-level students?

No notable patterns emerged from the analysis of the data for the academic-level students. The data from the general-level students provided a pattern which indicates that student attitudes or perceptions gradually become more negative with each grade level the students complete An exception to this statement was noted on the "I think" subscale for the 33 B (see Table 8) participants. The variability of the responses for this group provided a mean that was larger than the lower general-level courses surveyed. It is important to note that there are a smaller number of participants in this grouping. One must view small samples or groupings with caution. It is difficult to identify whether significance is presented within the data or if the results would be "typical" or average if the sample of people was larger. On the other hand, the sample of students represented by 33 B may have attitudes which are typically more positive than those of their peers. Without further investigation it is difficult to determine why this group is different than the other student groupings.

Research Question 2:

Is gender a differentiating factor in positive or negative student perceptions?

For this sample, the female students provided responses which indicated more positive perception than those of their male peers (see table 6). In their study, The Adolescent Experience, King and Peart (1986) indicate that previous research suggest girls were more positively disposed toward school than boys.

Research Question 3:

Does a relationship exist between the students' age and/or the number of years in high school and the perceptions of school experience?

No significant relationships or patterns were noted for either student age or number of years spent in high school for this sample of students (see tables 9, 10).

Research Question 4:

Is there a relationship between student employment and students' attitudes towards themselves and school?

The students who were employed as well as attending school provided perceptions and attitudes concerning themselves which were more positive than the perceptions of the students who were not employed (see table 3). No significant relationships were identified when the subscales of "I think" and "Others think" were compared in relation to the variable of student employment.

Research Question 5:

Does a negative or positive relationship exist between the student's involvement in extracurricular activities and the student's perceptions of his or her school experience?

The students who were involved in extracurricular activities at the school consistently rated their perceptions and attitudes to be more positive than their peers who were not involved in extracurricular activities (see tables 2, 4, & 7). Past research has indicated positive relationships between extracurricular participation and a student's overall attitude toward school (Levine & Havighurst, 1989).

Research Question 6:

What impact, if any, does this specific school improvement program have on the attitudes of the students within the school?

The students perceptions concerning the school improvement program did not provide any significant patterns which would indicate an overly negative or positive attitude towards the program (see table 5). The subscale means were all above average which indicates that the perceptions of the students are more favorable than negative.

Research Question 7:

Does there seem to be a difference in what the individual student perceives compared to what they think other students in the system perceive?

The students consistently reported on all four subscales that they perceived the attitudes and perceptions of their peers to be more negative than their own (see table 5). This data is discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

A formal qualitative analysis was not conducted during the current study. However, comments which were provided by some of the respondents are presented in this section of the thesis to enhance the reader's understanding of the students' high school experience. The students were requested to respond to four open-ended questions that addressed their opinions of their high school life and experience. The comments which are provided represent a sample of the opinions offered by the students.

Comments on Open-Ended Questions

**Table 11 Comments on the question: (a sample)
What is the best part of high school life?**

"The social life." (15 year-old)

"Friends, we don't have to pay bills (yet) or work full time." (17 year-old)

"Getting to meet friends and discovering your place in the world." (19 year-old)

"Learning how to relate to others in relationships." (15 year-old)

"Making friends, feeling included and having fun. Learning things you can use in life." (16 year-old)

"Haven't discovered that yet." (17 year-old)

"Being allowed more freedom." (17 year-old)

"Getting good grades to be proud of." (16 year-old)

A main theme that was repeated several times in a variety of ways by the students was the importance of friendship and the feeling that they belonged. King and Peart (1986) caution that the value of friends for most young people should not be underestimated; most students interpret social and political events using values shared with friends. Another theme which was prevalent throughout the questionnaires was that of self discovery and increased freedom at the high school level. The overall focus which was extracted from the questionnaires involved many factors which affect the students self concept and identity.

Table 12 Comments on the question: (a sample)
"What is the worst part of high school life?"

"There are a lot of people in school that don't give other people a chance to prove themselves. They have preconceived notions." (18 year-old)

"Stress - Juggling things in your life to set priorities " (15 year-old)

"The hard work it takes to get through and the self-discipline to go when you know legally you don't have to." (17 year-old)

"Trying to figure out who you are and what you wish to do in life." (16 year-old)

"At this stage in life, teenagers go through a confusing stage and it can really screw up your performance in high school." (17 year-old)

"Trying to fit in." (15 year-old)

"The pressures from people who expect a lot from you." (17 year-old)

"Stereotypes, pressures, peer pressure." (16 year-old)

"Feeling overwhelmed with homework or social situations or in decisions about the future." (17 year-old)

"Trying to live up to expectations which are given indirectly by other students." (17 year-old)

The theme of increased expectations and responsibilities was very evident in the responses given to this question. Students in society today are experiencing many of the same pressures as adults do when they are expected to "juggle" a job, school expectations, and a social life. Peer pressure was identified to be another significant concern to many of the respondents. The theme of searching for identity, which was identified as positive by some of the students who commented on the first question, is now viewed in a negative manner by other students.

**Table 13 Comments on the question: (a sample)
"If you could change anything about your school, what would you change?"**

"Most of the students' outlooks, they are not as motivated to get involved in things such as sports or clubs." (17 year-old)

"The reputation." (17 year-old)

"The attitude." (15 year-old)

"I would first change the atmosphere and try to get people to accept different ideas and people." (17year-old)

"It's reputation as a bad school." (19 year-old)

"Nothing." (17 year-old)

"To be a better school in attendance - more school spirit." (17 year-old)

"Make it more modern, have more computers etc." (16 year-old)

"The music program." (15 year-old)

"The extracurricular program." (16 year-old)

"The team spirit. We have very little team spirit." (16 year-old)

"The students attitudes towards spirit and activities." (17 year-old)

"Its academic and sports reputation." (17 year-old)

"The dropout rate." (15 year-old)

"The attitudes and perspectives of some of the teachers." (15 year-old)

"The appearance of the school inside and out." (15 year-old)

The reputation of their school was a concern of a large percentage of the student respondents. Although only a few of the students offered suggestions of how to improve it, this was indicated to be the greatest area of change required within the school. Many other themes identified from this question involved aspects which were related to improving the student body attitude, teacher attitudes, the school's appearance, and the school's various programs.

Table 14 Comments on the question: (a sample) "If you had a chance to change (the school improvement program), what would you change?

"Nothing." (15 year-old)

"Better prizes to get students more motivated in the program." (16 year-old)

"Nothing - except more expensive prizes." (16 year-old)

"Well no one is going to stay in school to win a 6 pack of pop or sunglasses - I would change the prizes." (15 year-old)

"It is fine now." (17 year-old)

"Nothing - (the program) means nothing to me - I come to school for me, not a prize." (17 year-old)

"The fact that it seems to be like a bribe and that it's not as motivating as it should be." (17 year-old)

"Make the attendance policy not as strict and have more activities to get involved with." (17 year-old)

"More prizes - to involve more students - more motivation." (15 year-old)

"I would make it less of an 'elitist' group involving the students who didn't qualify so as to encourage them into qualifying."(19 year-old)

The attitudes expressed about the school improvement program which is currently implemented in the school provides mixed reviews of the acceptance of the program. The program seems to hold the interest of some students while others are very critical of the method of enticing the students to become motivated not to miss school. Informal interviews with students also confirmed that the students who were eligible for prizes were much more interested than the students who were no longer eligible to claim any prizes (Student interviews, personal communication, June 1992). Other than suggesting the addition of more expensive prizes, the students could not offer any other means to attract more students into taking the program seriously.

The results which have been presented in this section are discussed in the following chapter in relation to relevant research and future recommendations for similar studies.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between student perceptions and school climate. The literature review of this study integrates and summarizes an investigation of a large body of educational research in an attempt to provide a clearer conceptual understanding of the forces which shape a school's climate. After addressing the major issues surrounding school climate research, the author attempted to narrow the focus of the study to the perceptions of the students within a school system.

The data which are provided by this study must be viewed and treated cautiously. It is important to consider that the generalizability of the results are very limited given the restriction of the sample to one small urban high school. The time of data collection may serve as one other variable which affects the generalizability of the results.

It is noteworthy to restate the concern of validity within this study. Most studies which utilize self-report instruments, caution readers of possible biased results which may be considered to be invalid because of a tendency to answer in a socially desirable manner. The focus of the present study stresses that it is essential to consider the individual student accounts of experience within the context of high school.

Wehlage & Rutter (1986) indicate that new research might be better directed toward understanding how the institutional character of schools affects the students, specifically potential dropouts. A post-hoc analysis of the methodological design of the present study suggests that the utilization of methods which are more qualitative in nature would have provided a more involved analysis of individual accounts. Although the present study is sensitive to the uniqueness of experiences of the members of the sample selected, the methodology does not enable the researcher to confirm the results of the analysis with the participants. This point is an important consideration in the recommendations for further research.

The research conducted in the present study primarily focused on four areas of student perceptions which were deemed important by the researcher at the outset of the study. The students were asked to provide their perceptions of themselves, their school and school experience, their peers' attitudes towards school, and their attitudes toward their school improvement program. These results were analyzed in relation to a variety of demographic variables to identify areas of significant findings. Only the findings which are deemed to be significant to this study are addressed in the final discussion.

Conclusions

Two sections of the analysis within the results chapter of this thesis have proven to be significant to this study. The first area involves the comparison of the individual student's attitudes and that student's perceptions of the attitudes of his or her peers. The demographic categories of involvement in extracurricular activities and participation in part-time employment are included in the second section of the analysis

Individual Perceptions Compared to Perceived Peer Perceptions

Throughout the analysis of the student questionnaire data, a pattern which indicated that, overall, the students within the school perceived the attitudes of their peers to be more negative or less positive than their own perceptions. A follow up investigation of why this was the case was not completed, given this situation, the author must make inferences using the current literature for support. The manner in which students interpret their school life may be described by perceptions. Adler and Towne (1990) suggest that in order to receive meaning from a situation the students must interpret it using their past interactions and experiences as a guide.

Brookover and Erickson (1975) indicated that individuals behave in terms of what they perceive of others and not solely in terms of the actual expectations and assessments that others hold. Hamachek (1982) cautioned that errors in perception such as: clinging to first impressions, assuming other people are similar to us, and favoring negative impressions over positive ones can lead the formation of an incorrect perceptions or attitudes of the situation or interaction with another person. The students' perceptions, whether valid or invalid, determine the manner in which they will conduct themselves within the school setting.

The students surveyed for the current study perceive some interaction within their school that leads them to believe their peers are negatively oriented to school and school experiences. Roueche and Baker (1986) offer that "a school's climate - the overall environment, values, shared beliefs, and personality - clearly affects the inhabitants of the school" (p. 24). When asked what they would change about their school, many students offered that they would change its reputation and the attitudes of students and staff. It is interesting to note that the individuals attribute the negativity in the school to everyone else in the school setting except themselves. This finding would support the essence of what the author has tried to explain about the climate of the school. It is a "feel" which is communicated to members or visitors through interactions in the school. The negative perceptions and climate are maintained through a self-perpetuating cycle - the students perceive negativity - they respond to it in a less than positive manner, and the cycle continues. The students may not want to attribute the negative attitudes to themselves, but they were willing to indicate that their peers hold negative attitudes. The level of student involvement has been identified as an important contributing factor to the quality of the "personality" of the school. Extracurricular activities and student employment have been identified as two factors which most often influence the amount of involvement a student may have within a school setting.

Other Influential Factors

Extracurricular Involvement

King and Peart (1990) suggest that extracurricular activities provide an opportunity for the student to achieve increased school satisfaction, success outside the classroom, and enhanced self-esteem. The results of the present study indicate that the students who are involved in some form of extracurricular activities have rated their perceptions of themselves, the school program, attitude about school and others attitude about school and school experience to be more positive than the students who do not participate in school activities. Part of the reason for the more positive attitude may be attributed to the students perceiving extra interest and caring from the teachers within the school. King and Peart (1990) suggest that the students may sense that the extra time and energy that is required of the teacher reflects an attitude of caring.

Participation in extracurricular activities not only allows the students to achieve success in other school related areas, but it also provides students with a chance to fulfill social needs. Anisef, Paasche, and Turrittin (1980) indicate that extracurricular activities serve a variety of important functions, including channeling youthful energy in approved direction, promoting school cohesion, providing students with areas of achievement outside the classroom, and providing the students and teachers with an opportunity to interact outside of classroom demands. In their study, The Adolescent Experience, King and Peart (1986) discovered a positive relationship between extracurricular participation and a student's overall attitude toward school. They suggested that those who participate in the extracurricular activities of school are more satisfied with all aspects of school life than those students who are uninvolved. Furthermore, Soderberg (1988) indicates that the lack of involvement in extracurricular activities is an important school-related factor associated with student alienation and premature school leaving.

Employment

School attitude and involvement were also considered to be effected by the amount of time in which the adolescent was involved with part-time employment. King and Peart (1986) suggest that students who are employed for up to fourteen hours a week are also usually more involved in school activities than their unemployed peers. However, students who are employed for more than fourteen hours are less likely to participate in school activities at all.

King and Peart (1990) state that the worth of employment must be weighted for each individual student. The advantages are both economic and personal: a job supplies a source of money and it boosts their self esteem. The disadvantages relate primarily to school: working students have less time for homework and extracurricular activities. The results of the present study indicated that the students who were employed rated their opinions of themselves to be higher than the opinions of their unemployed peers. No additional significant relationships were identified among the comparisons of the variable of student employment and the other subscales in the questionnaire.

Implications of The Current Study

Interactions involving students in a school setting account for a large percentage of the members' interactions within the school. If the attitude/perceptions of this portion of the school population is negatively inclined in their attitudes towards their school and others, the overall climate of the school will be perceived as negative. King and Peart (1990) caution that whether or not a school's reputation is deserved or accurate, student perception of their school's reputation influences how they respond to the school. It is the first task of the investigator to attempt to identify the source or sources of student negativity. Each school's climate is a product of the interactions of a unique school population. Once the unique climate has been identified and defined then possible interventions may be developed to fit the system. Attempts may be made to boost morale, increase involvement, improve achievement, and maximize school satisfaction.

Theoretical Implications

More research is required as it applies to student perception and attitude formation. Much of the past research concerning school dropouts has described at-risk and background characteristics. The future research must continue to focus on the actual experiences of the students within the school system. As an increasing number of investigations are conducted in this manner, themes will appear within the school improvement literature which will identify areas of concern. This process may also enable the investigators in the area of dropout and school climate research to develop a more integrated body of research literature.

Practical Implications

A focus on the school environment or climate has been advocated as one of the key ingredients in the research into school effectiveness and school improvement (Fullan, 1986: Gottsfredson & Gottsfredson, 1987; Miller & Lieberman, 1988). The question of the present study becomes: Is it possible to change climate in a manner which will target the student perception and attitudes?

A process of improvement must be initiated by a school community which is committed to change. Duttweiler (1989) suggests an initial step in the attempt to alter a school's climate is to investigate the perceived problems by involving the members of the school community. Howard, Howell, and Brainard (1987) identify the following school factors to be important in a proposed change or manipulation of a school's climate: (1) opportunities for continuous growth, (2) respect, (3) trust, (4) high morale, (5) cohesiveness, (6) opportunities for input, (6) school renewal, and (7) caring. The authors suggest that the identified factors can be a result of specific practices and programs within the school which are influenced by program, material and process determinants.

The following process determinants are considered essential to the improvement of the interactions among members in the school: (1) effective problem solving abilities, (2) improvement of school goals, (3) identifying and working with conflicts, (4) effective communications, (5) integrated involvement in decision making, (6) autonomy with accountability, and (7) the ability to plan for the future. It is important to emphasize that changing the climate of a school requires a collective endeavor. Schein (1985) cautions, "When we are dealing with social systems, there is no such thing as spontaneous change" (p. 299). The efforts by the administration, staff, (and students) must be consistently maintained if results are to be experienced.

Suggestions for Further Research

Areas of further research may continue to explore the relationship between student perceptions and quality of school climate. Future studies should work towards refining or developing an instrument which provides consistent content validity measures and increased reliability. A larger sample of students involving a cross-section of schools would be recommended. It would be interesting to survey schools which have different yet defined reputations within a community. The comparisons drawn from these surveys would provide invaluable data concerning differing school climates.

Future research in the area of student perceptions would be most beneficial if it was qualitative in nature. Specific student accounts will add "richness" to the description of student experiences which are currently reported in the research literature. Utilizing student interviews in a qualitative manner would allow the researcher to present the student experience using the student's own language and level of understanding. By reporting the student's exact experience, the researcher would also safeguard his or her study from personal inferences and generalizations.

Lastly, more studies are required which focus on the various school (climate) improvement programs. This study is limited to the exploration of one specific program and in is not intended to stand for all school improvement programs. Researchers and practitioners need to publish more studies which describe positive, as well as, negative results of school improvement programs so other practitioners may learn from their colleagues' past experiences.

Summary

Past research has identified student satisfaction as a criterion variable of school effectiveness. An assumption was made by the current researcher that the quality of student perceptions would provide a useful measure of student satisfaction. This study has served to reinforce the need to investigate and understand high school students as individuals. King and Peart (1990) state that while we attempt to put students in pigeon holes, they constantly restate their individuality reinforcing that young people need to be treated as individuals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ETHICAL APPROVAL FROM
THE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY
RESEARCH AND ETHICS COMMITTEE

University of Alberta
Edmonton
Canada T6G 2G5

Department of Educational Psychology
Faculty of Education
6-102 Education North, Telephone (403) 492-5245
Fax (403) 492-1318

June 24, 1992

From: Department of Educational Psychology
Research and Ethics Committee

The Research and Ethics Committee of the Department of Educational Psychology has reviewed the attached proposal and finds it acceptable with respect to ethical matters.

Applicants: Dr. G. Hess on behalf of Sheila Mellon (graduate student).

Title: An Investigation of School Environment.

Participating Agencies:

Recommended Change:

L Rogers
Chairman or Designate, Research and Ethics Committee

June 23/92
Date

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

January 20, 1993

Dear Parent or Guardian:

Your teenager has been selected to participate in a University of Alberta study exploring the school experience at (High School Name). With your permission, I will be asking your teenager to complete a questionnaire which will help me explore the school environment at (High School Name). The data from the questionnaire will become the basis of my Masters of Education thesis.

The questionnaire will require one class period of your son's or daughter's time and will be administered at school in February. Your teenager's principal has granted full permission for the study. Participation is voluntary, and no names are required; consequently all responses are anonymous and confidential. Also, at any time, for any reason, your son/daughter may withdraw from the study.

The project has also been approved by the Ethics Review Committee at the University of Alberta, Department of Educational Psychology, and the School Board. I hope that you will give permission for your daughter or son to participate. I am excited about the use of the results to better understand how students perceive their high school life experience.

Would you please sign the below-noted permission form and return it with you teen to school at your earliest convenience. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to call me at the University of Alberta (492-5254 message), or at home (431-2072), at any time. If you wish you may contact my thesis advisor,
Dr. Gretchen Hess at the (492-1155).

Thank you for your cooperation,

Sheila Mellon

Permission Slip to Participate in Mellon Study

I (we) the Parent/Guardian of ____________________________ do give permission for the above teen to participate in a University of Alberta Research Project to be conducted by Sheila Mellon.

______________________________ Date __________________
Parent/Guardian Signature

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

SURVEY OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Dear Student Participant:

First of all, I would like to thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. I am really interested in finding out what a student like yourself thinks about school life. This includes the impressions you have of yourself, teachers, school subjects, friends and anything or anyone that you are involved with in a school day. This information is important when we consider ways to improve programs and activities in schools.

The following pages include items which ask you to rate how much you agree or disagree with the statement. If there are any questions that you do not feel comfortable about answering, please leave them blank. Your answers will be kept private and confidential, no one at (School Name) will see your responses. Please do not put your name anywhere on the survey. Also, at any time, for any reason, you may withdraw from the study.

If you think I have missed something, I would like to know about it. Please use the extra space on any of the pages to include your comments. Your comments and opinions are very important to me. By completing the questions and offering comments you are allowing me to understand your experience in high school.

Thank you for participating,
Sheila Mellon

Please check the appropriate choices, or write in the required responses:

1. Male ___ Female ___ Age ____

2. Do you identify yourself with an ethnic group?
   Yes ___ No ____
   If yes, which one? ______________.

3. How many years have you been in highschool? ____

4. In general, would you classify yourself as a(n):
   ____ A Student
   ____ B Student
   ____ C Student
   ____ D Student

5. Did you go to school in the past 12 months?
   Yes ____ No ____

6. Did you attend (School Name) last term? Yes ____ No ____.

7. Approximately how many classes did you miss last term?
   ______________.

8. Approximately how many times were you late for a class last term? ___________.

9. Have you dropped any courses last term:
   Yes ____ No ____

10. Do you have a job? Yes ____ No ____

    If Yes, approximately how many hours do you work per week: _____.

11. Are you involved in extracurricular activities?
    Yes ___ No ___

    Check off as many as apply:
    __ Sports __ Intramural
    __ Music __ Student Council
    __ Drama __ School Functions
    __ Clubs __ Other

12. What are your future aspirations?
    Check off as many as apply:
    ___ Finish high school
    ___ Technical School (N.A.I.T./S.A.I.T. etc)
    ___ College
    ___ University
    ___ Don't know

13. Overall, my family earns:
    ____ More than most families
    ____ Less than most families
    ____ The same as most families

14. Class in which you are completing survey
    ____________________.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? Indicate your response by circling the appropriate code beside each statement.

Response Code: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

15. I would like to do well in school	SD	D	N	A	SA
16. I could do a lot better in school if I wanted to	SD	D	N	A	SA
17. My attitude towards school has improved over last year	SD	D	N	A	SA
18. I feel like I belong at my school	SD	D	N	A	SA
19. I am proud to tell people my school grades	SD	D	N	A	SA
20. I am proud to be involved at my school	SD	D	N	A	SA
21. School is one place where embarrassing things are likely to happen	SD	D	N	A	SA
22. Other students ask me for help in school because they think I am smart	SD	D	N	A	SA
23. School is a place where my ideas are respected	SD	D	N	A	SA
24. I feel good when my hard work pays off in school	SD	D	N	A	SA
25. I have confidence in myself	SD	D	N	A	SA
26. I often wish I were someone else	SD	D	N	A	SA
27. I have a lot of friends	SD	D	N	A	SA
28. Most of the things I attempt to do have a way of turning out wrong	SD	D	N	A	SA
29. When I am with friends I usually do what they want to do	SD	D	N	A	SA
30. My friends treat me as if I am as smart as other people our age	SD	D	N	A	SA
31. Most other kids my age believe I am a leader	SD	D	N	A	SA
32. Most people I know think I'll do well in whatever I decide to do	SD	D	N	A	SA
33. I find it easy to make new friends	SD	D	N	A	SA
34. I have little respect for myself	SD	D	N	A	SA
35. I try hard not to miss school	SD	D	N	A	SA

Response Code: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

36.	My class attendance has improved since last year	SD	D	N	A	SA
37.	My marks have improved since the last year	SD	D	N	A	SA
38.	I am involved in school activities	SD	D	N	A	SA
39.	I would like to be more involved in school activities	SD	D	N	A	SA
40.	I usually quit when my school work is too hard	SD	D	N	A	SA
41.	I am doing as well in school as I would like to	SD	D	N	A	SA
42.	When I see other students succeed, I want to do the same	SD	D	N	A	SA
43.	I am doing the best I can at school	SD	D	N	A	SA
44.	Most of my courses are boring	SD	D	N	A	SA
45.	I often feel left out of things	SD	D	N	A	SA
46.	I get along with most guys I know	SD	D	N	A	SA
47.	I get along with most girls I know	SD	D	N	A	SA
48.	I like working with people who are different from me	SD	D	N	A	SA
49.	My parents are interested in how I do in school	SD	D	N	A	SA
50.	I compete with my friends in most activities	SD	D	N	A	SA
51.	I can never seem to satisfy anyone with anything I do	SD	D	N	A	SA
52.	When I work hard it is to please my parents, not myself	SD	D	N	A	SA
53.	My parents believe I have the ability to do well in anything I chose	SD	D	N	A	SA
54.	My friends are there for me when I need them	SD	D	N	A	SA
55.	In general, I am satisfied with (School Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA
56.	I get along with most of my teachers at (School Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA
57.	I chose (School Name) because it is the best school in (City Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA

YOUR ANSWERS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO ME !

Response Code: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

58. I am proud to attend (School Name) .... SD D N A SA
59. I believe there is a 'team spirit' at (School Name) .... SD D N A SA
60. I think most students work together to make (School Name) a better school .... SD D N A SA
61. I think most students at (School Name) treat each other fairly .... SD D N A SA
62. I think (School Name) has changed for the better over the last year................. SD D N A SA
63. I think (School Name) has a good reputation for sports .... SD D N A SA
64. I think (School Name) has a good academic reputation .... SD D N A SA
65. I think (School Name) is known for its friendly students .... SD D N A SA
66. In general, most students are satisfied with (School Name) .... SD D N A SA
67. Most students get along with most of their teachers at (School Name) .... .SD D N A SA
68. Most students chose (School Name) because it is the best school in (City Name) SD D N A SA
69. Most students are proud to attend (School Name) .... SD D N A SA
70. Most students believe there is a 'team spirit' at (School Name) .... SD D N A SA
71. Most students work together to make (School Name) a better school .... SD D N A SA
72. Most students at (School Name) treat each other fairly .... SD D N A SA
73. Most students think our school has changed for the better over the last year . SD D N A SA
74. Most students think (School Name) has a good reputation for sports .... SD D N A SA
75. Most students think (School Name) has a good academic reputation .... SD D N A SA
76. Most students think (School Name) is known for its friendly students .... SD D N A SA
77. (The School Program) has accomplished what it was meant to .... SD D N A SA
78. (The School Program) is very motivating for the students .... SD D N A SA
79. Most students at (School Name) are involved with (The School Program) .... SD D N A SA
80. Most teachers are involved with (The School Program) .... SD D N A SA

Response Code: SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neither Agree nor Disagree; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

81.	Most parents support (The School Program) at (School Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA
82.	The community is very interested in the success of (School Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA
83.	The community should become more involved with (School Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA
84.	Publicity given to (The School Program) improves the school	SD	D	N	A	SA
85.	Changes could be made to improve (The School Program)	SD	D	N	A	SA
86.	(The School Program) is very effective as it is now	SD	D	N	A	SA
87.	(The School Program) motivates students to attend school regularly	SD	D	N	A	SA
88.	(The School Program) has not reached its objectives..	SD	D	N	A	SA
89.	Students in other schools are jealous of students at (School Name)	SD	D	N	A	SA

90. What is the best part of high school life? ____

____

____

91. What is the worst part of high school life?____

____

____.

92. If you could change anything about (School Name) what would you change?

--.

93. If you had a chance to change (The School Program), what would you change?

--.

MANY THANKS ! !
YOUR RESPONSES WILL BE MOST HELPFUL TO ME ! !